

The Vision Realized: the First Successful Capital City

From the time Louisiana became a state in 1812, the legislature had argued over the capital's ultimate location. In 1850, they could finally legislate in a structure that was successfully built exclusively for the government. The people of Baton Rouge reveled in the **State House** (known today as the Old State Capitol); it was the center of social activity. Politicians still grumbled about the lack of amenities found in the river town; however, because they could not easily return to New Orleans, the legislators accomplished more than they ever had in Donaldsonville.



Louisiana legislature voting on seceding from the union

What legislators had successfully put to rest, the Civil War soon undid. Twelve years after the capital had moved to Baton Rouge, Union forces occupied the city. The capital was hastily relocated to **Opelousas**.

Is That a Fact?

- The legislature appropriated \$100,000 for the capitol in 1847, then approved another \$121,000 to complete the building and add an iron fence.
- The architect, James Dakin, took about 2 1/2 years to complete the building.
- 4,039,786 bricks were used to construct the building.
- The 1861 Louisiana State Secessionist Convention met here.

The State House



Governors serving here were Joseph Walker, Paul O. Hebert, Robert Wickliffe, and Thomas O. Moore.

“Dear Sir: I have the pleasure to inform you that the new Capitol of Louisiana is ready for the reception of the Legislature. We have discharges all of our carpenters and joiners with the exception of seven . . . The fears expressed by some gentlemen that the new edifice would not be ready for the meeting of the Legislature are now at an end, and as for the convenience and capacity of the building, it will answer for itself satisfactorily.”

-James Dakin, architect, to Maunsel White, commissioner

1/7/1850